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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4373
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3040
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 3257
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RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 1963

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 001457

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SATE FOR NEA/MAG, NEA/PI, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/30/2011
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: IREX BRIEF TO THE MFA

Classified By: A/Polcouns Cherie Lenzen, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The PAO and IO met with Wassane Zailachi, Director of the North American, Mexico and Central America division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on July 26. The meeting included a discussion of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)-funded IREX regional project, scheduled Public Affairs Section (PAS) press workshops and the fall Fulbright Commission meetings. The following day, in a separate meeting with A/Polcouns, Zailachi expressed her concern about IREX and other projects which are being implemented in Morocco without GOM involvement in project planning. End Summary.

12. (C) On July 26, the PAO and the IO met with Wassane Zailachi, Director of the North American, Mexico and Central America division of the MFA. The purpose of the meeting was to brief Zailachi on the MEPI-funded IREX regional press activities, and the scheduled PAS press workshops and Fulbright Commission meetings. Zailachi is aware that freedom of the press and expression are significant issues for the Mission. The Embassy routinely discusses with her office U.S. efforts to support democratic reform in Morocco.

13. (C) The PAO introduced the discussion with a summary of the upcoming PAS programs which are designed to build confidence between the press and politicians, e.g., the September "ombudsman" program. Training programs and seminars being conducted by US nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in cooperation with Moroccan NGOs, in particular the IREX project, to encourage a free and responsible press were also discussed. The PAO emphasized that the U.S. wants to reach out to Moroccan NGOs and civil society to identify ways the U.S. can support their efforts to strengthen freedom of expression. The PAO reviewed that the Mission's understanding is that press training programs and seminars are acceptable under Moroccan law, but that direct foreign subsidies to the media are not.

14. (C) The PAO also discussed the upcoming (September 17 through 19) IREX Media Standards Conference to be held in Marrakech, provisionally titled "The Future of Arab Media." This conference will coincide with IREX's release of the first Media Sustainability Index (MSI) report for the region. Zailachi asked three questions: 1. Will members of the government-owned press be invited or only private/independent press members? 2. Will the conference have open participation? 3. How have other governments reacted to the conference and to the report? The PAO promised Zailachi that PAS keep her apprised of any developments.

Comment

15. (C) Throughout the spring and early summer, Zailachi has spoken frequently to Emboffs about how the MFA is striving to understand USG funding sources, the amount of money the USG provides to Morocco and the types of programs the USG is funding. On July 27, A/Polcouns met with Zailachi separately on other matters. During that meeting, Zailachi expressed her concern about IREX activities. Zailachi would prefer that programs be discussed with the appropriate MFA officials prior to implementation. For her, discussion of programs in the planning stages should take into consideration both Moroccan and USG goals and interests. Zailachi emphasized that it is important for the GOM and the USG to work together to achieve goals. Her opinion is that IREX does not take Morocco's particular needs into consideration and tends to group Morocco with other countries which do not necessarily have the same needs.

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